C'h'angan, the seat of empire and a sort of gateway to the populous regions of China, was naturally an important terminus of the trade, and its streets and inns must have presented a lively and cosmopolitan appearance, with merchants from many a city and land in the distant West.

The sea routes to the south coast grew in popularity, possibly in part because of the difficulty in the later years of the dynasty of traversing the overland roads. Even as early as the seventh century they were much employed. Canton won from the ports of Tongking the primacy in overseas trade. By the eighth century, Persians, Arabs, and merchants from India were coming to Canton in large vessels, and a special office was created in the city for the registry of ships, the control of exports, and the collection of duties. With the rise of their power under the first flush of Islam, Arabs began to have an important part in this seaborne traffic and continued to hold it for many years. Chinese goods were to be had in the bazaars of Bagdad, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate. In 758 Arabs and Persians were sufficiently strong in Canton to loot the city — perhaps in retaliation for Chinese exactions. In the ninth century we hear of Nestorian Christians, Jews, Moslems, and Persians in Canton — all of them obviously from the West. In the ninth century the Canton trade was still closely controlled by the state and, perhaps as an application of the Chinese principle of group responsibility, a Moslem was appointed to administer the law of Islam among his co-religionists and so to maintain order. This looks like extraterritoriality, but it must be noted that the head Moslem appears to have been named by and to have been responsible

to the Chinese authorities and was not an official of his own government. By at least the ninth century others of the ports of South China, notably what is now Ch'iianchow, near the present Amoy, entered into competition with Canton. Yangchow also had foreign merchants and its share in sea-borne trade. Koreans controlled much of the coastwise shipping.

As under previous dynasties, the leading commodities of this commerce combined small bulk with large value. Silk was still a chief article of export, and spices and porcelain, some of the latter from Fukien, were also carried abroad. To China came such goods as ivory, incense, copper, tortoise shell, and rhinoceros